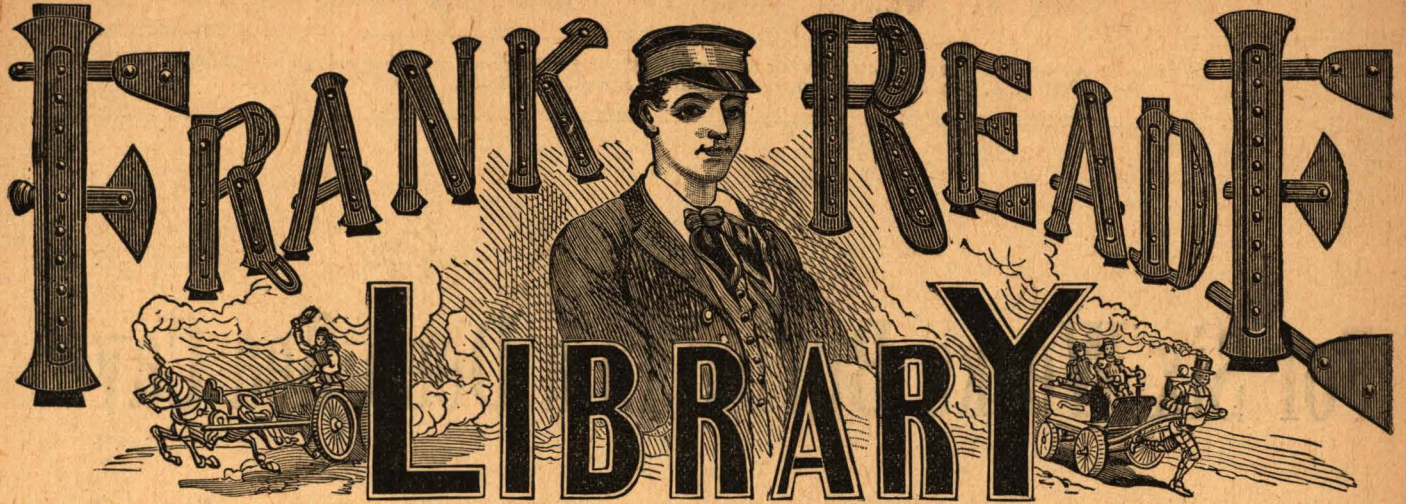


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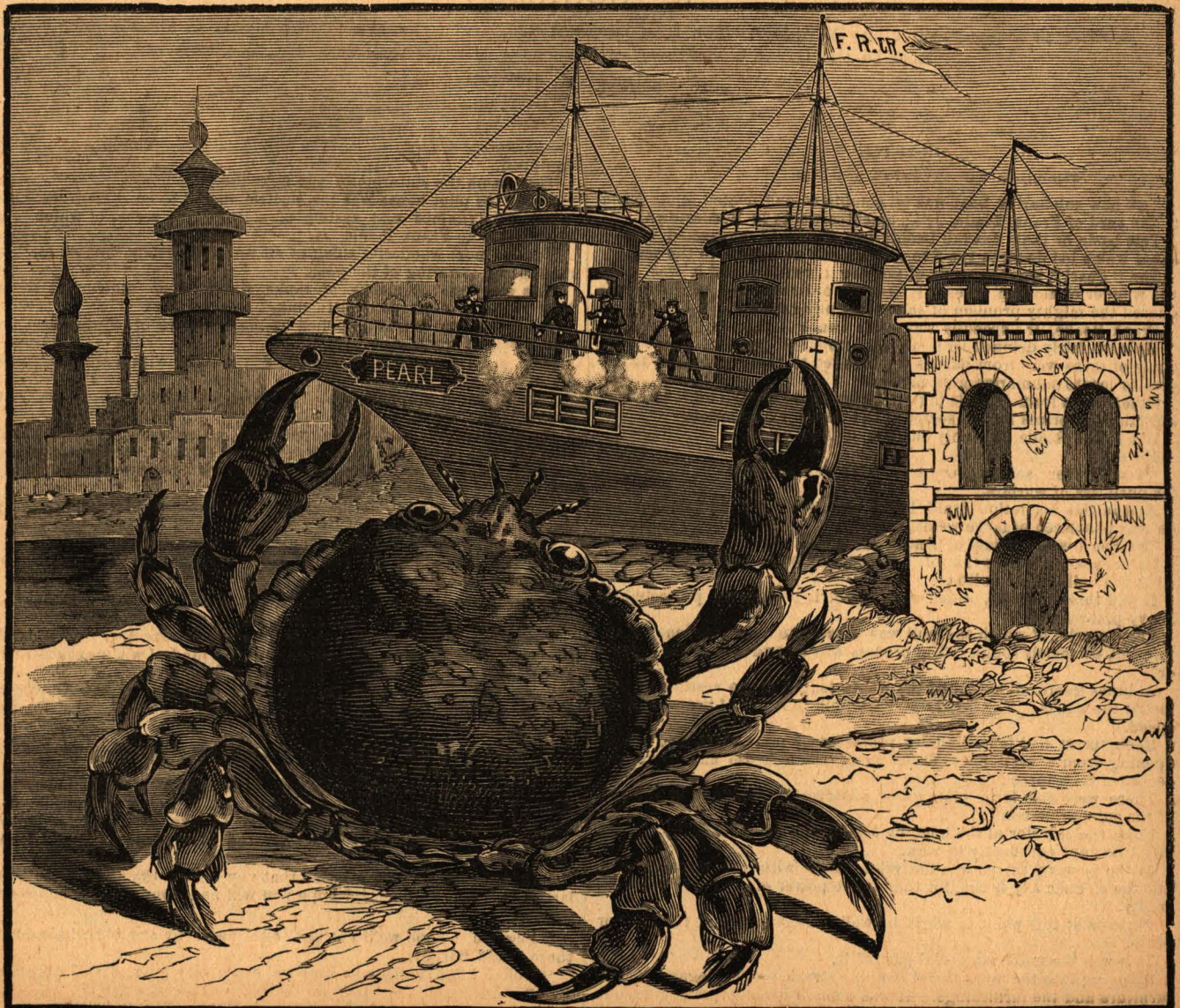


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FOR SIX WEEKS BURIED IN A DEEP SEA CAVE: or, FRANK READE, JR.'S GREAT SUBMARINE SEARCH. By "NONAME."



"Begorra, here goes!" cried Barney, as he fired at the monster. The bullet struck the hard shell of the giant crab, but rattled off like a pebble. A dozen shots were thus fired without avail. Then Frank cried: "Aim for the eye! Take steady aim and hit it!" This was no difficult thing to do. The creature's eyes were as big as saucer plates.

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For Six Weeks Buried in a Deep Sea Cave;

OR,

FRANK READE, JR.'S GREAT SUBMARINE SEARCH.

A WONDERFUL STORY OF EQUATORIAL SEAS.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "The Mysterious Mirage," "The Underground Sea," "To the End of the Earth in an Air-Ship," "Lost in the Great Undertow," "The Chase of a Comet," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

DESCRIBES THE INVENTOR AND HIS INVENTION.

THE new submarine boat was all completed and floated in the basin in the yard of Frank Reade, Jr.'s., machine works in Readestown.

This basin or tank was full twenty feet deep and connected with a canal which led down to the river, which was navigable to the sea.

The "Pearl" was the name of the new invention, and it was truly the wonder of modern times. It was no ordinary feat to have conquered the mighty problem of submarine navigation.

Frank Reade, Jr., speedily was made aware of this.

He was fairly deluged with letters from all parts of the world. Some of these were from parties who desired to recover sunken treasures or locate submarine gold mines.

Others were from officials high in authority in foreign nations, offering fabulous prices for the secret of the boat's construction.

But Frank Reade, Jr., only laughed at these offers.

He said:

"I will never sell any secret of mine to a government to be used for purposes of warfare."

And in this resolution Frank Reade, Jr., was quite independent, for he was possessed of large wealth.

The Pearl was a model of beauty and grace.

Its lines were unlike that of any ordinary craft, resembling somewhat the build of a monitor.

It had three turrets, which were revolving windows protected by heavy plate glass.

The material of which the hull was constructed was hardened steel thin but extremely tough. The process was known only to the inventor.

A brass guardrail extended the whole length of the vessel and protected the decks. The Pearl had been built narrow of beam and for speed.

Each turret had four windows protected by plate glass, and a door opening from a vestibule. Three short masts arose also from the center of each turret.

There were also large plate glass observation windows in the hull of the submarine boat.

From the interior of the boat by this means the bottom of the sea could be kept constantly in view.

In the forward turret was the pilot house with the steering gear and the electric key board, for the motive power of the Pearl was electricity.

Perhaps at this point it might be well to take a look at the interior of the boat.

This was the most wonderful part of it.

Stepping into the main turret one was struck by the elegance of the furniture and the furnishings. It was a small chamber, of course, but was nevertheless fitted up fit for a king's atode.

Next to the main cabin was the dining saloon. This was admirably equipped.

Then came the staterooms, and next the pilot house.

Under the pilot house was the electric engine room. Here were the wonderful dynamos and system of storage, the secret of which was known only to Frank Reade, Jr.

But the most wonderful thing of all was the system devised for the raising and lowering of the boat.

This was done by means of tanks, which, when filled with water from valves, caused the boat to sink.

When this water was expelled by the pressure of compressed air then the boat would rise.

Next was the problem of furnishing the boat with a constant supply of fresh air.

This seemed a conundrum so far under the surface of the sea, but Frank had solved it.

He had skillfully perfected a chemical generator of oxygen, which could furnish air for all parts of the boat through various tubes and valves. This was so devised that it could also destroy all the poisonous gases and vapors.

This enabled the submarine voyagers to travel with impunity at any depth and for any length of time.

They could remain for weeks under the water without ill effects.

We have thus given the reader a very incomplete account of the submarine boat Pearl.

It would not now be amiss to introduce the voyagers who were to take the first trip in this wonderful boat.

First, there was Frank Reade, Jr., the young inventor. Then came two employees, Barney, an Irishman, with a fund of wit inexhaustible, and Pomp, a negro, as full of fun as a nut is of meat.

There was next Doctor Calliope, the president of the American Society of Pisciculture. A very learned man, indeed, was Doctor Calliope.

He was taking the voyage for the purpose of studying marine life and fish of the deep sea.

"You are the greatest benefactor of science of modern times, Mr. Reade," said the genial doctor, "only think of it. A submarine voyage and the most wonderful opportunity to explore the ocean depths ever known. And to think that I am the favored one. Ought I not to be happy?"

"Indeed, doctor, I am pleased that you regard the affair so enthusiastically," said Frank. "I hope you will find your dearest hopes rewarded."

"Begorra, I hope we'll not get swallowed by any big whale down there," said Barney.

"Golly! I don't believe he keep yo' down very long, I'ish," exploded Pomp.

The two were always badgering each other. Barney bristled up.

"Phwat's that yez say?" he cried, excitedly. "An' phwat's the raison, pray?"

"Massy Lordy, yo' is too green fo' to set steady on his stomach. Yo' berry much worse dan a hull watermilyun."

Barney shook his red mane aggressively.

"Shure that's an insult to a thrue son av the Emerald Isle!" he cried. "I'll have a fall out av yez fer that!"

"Don' yo' trubble dis chile!" warned Pomp. "I ain' de least bit afraid ob yo'!"

"Yez ain't, eh?" roared Barney, as he made a dive at the darky.

The coon eluded him partly but Barney caught him by the knee. Unfortunately they were a little too near the tank.

Barney lost his balance and went over the edge. Of course he pulled Pomp after him.

And down they went spluttering and splashing.

Both could swim like ducks, so there was no danger. Frank and the doctor watched them laughing heartily.

They scrambled out dripping, abashed, and with their ardor much cooled.

They slunk away to the engine room to dry their wet clothes. It was a case of even up.

Preparations went forward rapidly for the great under sea cruise.

Workmen were busy getting the machinery into apple-pie order and putting stores aboard her.

Of course the usual coterie of newspaper reporters appeared, and tried to learn all the secrets of the boat.

But the yard was kept closely guarded, and it was not easy to do this. A close outlook was also kept for tramps or cranks, who would not hesitate to do the boat harm.

One day the Pearl floated in the tank, all equipped and ready for the start.

No objective point had been named, no definite purpose. It was enough that they were to sail the ocean depths and explore its wonders.

Dr. Calliope was right in his element.

He had cabinets and scientific instruments carried aboard the boat for use in the research.

The starting hour at length arrived. All was in readiness.

Workmen were at the gate of the lock ready to open it. Frank, with Pomp and the doctor, stood on deck.

Barney was in the pilot-house ready for the start. He waited the word from Frank.

A band played outside. Throngs of people were along the river bank waiting for the boat to appear.

At just the right moment Frank made the signal to Barney.

The Celt pressed the electric key, the canal gate opened, and the boat glided into the canal.

A few moments later it had traversed the distance to the river. As it emerged upon the river current tremendous cheers went up from the crowd.

Frank and the doctor waved flags and the boat moved away down the river.

The great cruise was begun.

Barney put on all speed and Readestown was left far behind. It was not a long run to the sea.

Once in the salt water a practical test of the working powers of the boat was made.

It descended to the bottom, sailed at various elevations under water, and otherwise proved itself a great triumph.

But it was necessary to get many miles from land before any wonders of the sea depths would be found that would be worth noting.

So the Pearl put straight out for the middle of the ocean.

Then it bore south for equatorial seas. It was there that the doctor expected to meet with the widest field.

The submarine boat proved a fast sailer, and so it happened that it seemed no great lapse of time when Frank Reade, Jr., came on deck one day and said:

"We are now in equatorial seas. What say you, Doctor Calliope? Is this a favorable spot to descend?"

"Indeed, I believe it is," agreed the doctor. "Is it agreeable to you, Frank?"

"Perfectly."

With which Frank turned and called to Barney:

"Let the boat descend," he said.

"All roight, sor," replied the Celt.

Then there was a scramble by all to get into the cabin.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA.

BARNEY touched a spring, which hermetically sealed every door and window aboard the boat.

Then he pressed the reservoir lever. The compressed air was driven from the tank, and the boat began to sink.

Down she went rapidly.

Pressing a button, the interior of the boat was set ablaze with electric lights.

Then the great search-light sent its rays for hundreds of yards in every direction through the water.

Down—down sank the boat.

"That is queer!" cried Frank. "Is there no bottom here?"

The pressure on the boat now began to be felt. But just as the

young inventor was beginning to get really alarmed bottom was seen.

And such a wonderful spectacle as it was.

Barney held the boat in suspension for a few moments, looking for a suitable landing place.

This it was not easy to find owing to the dense marine growth which here covered the bottom of the sea.

But finally a spot was found upon a high rock. The boat settled down upon it.

From this point of vantage the voyagers could look in all directions and see the wonders of their position.

To attempt to describe it all in detail would require too much space.

There were forests of marine plants, many of them growing fully twenty feet high; coral recesses and reefs, rock caverns, and all holding some form of fish life.

Every kind of strange fish and sea monster thronged the submarine forest.

Dr. Calliope was right in his element.

He studied them at first with a powerful glass; then the desire to acquire some of the specimens was too powerful.

This led him to descend to the keel of the boat, where a small trap was arranged. Here he could manage by an ingenious contrivance to recover specimens from the immediate vicinity.

After some time spent in this manner, Frank started the boat for a new quarter.

It sailed away over the marine forest at a convenient and safe height. The search-light was kept busy all the while.

After awhile the topography of the ocean bed began to change.

The marine forest was succeeded by a level plain of purest white sand.

Here were shells of rich and variegated shapes and hues. They made an extremely beautiful and brilliant spectacle.

Some of these specimens the doctor was very anxious to secure; this largely augmented his collection.

For some while the boat glided on over the plain of sand without any incident of great note.

It was not until the scene began to change showing conglomerations of rocks, that any incident of an exciting sort occurred.

Then Pomp, who was looking out of one of the observation windows, suddenly screamed:

"Massy Lordy! We am gwine to be smashed suah. Look out dar, 'fish!"

Barney, who was in the pilot house, suddenly jammed the helm around. He saw the peril and was just in the nick of time.

A monster whale had dove straight for the boat with jaws wide open.

Had the leviathan struck the boat, it would have been the end of it. But Barney's action just caused the whale to miss its aim.

It went by the boat like an arrow out of a bow.

"Whew!" gasped the doctor, "that was a close shave."

"Dook out!" cried Frank, he is coming back!"

This was true.

"Bejabbers he'll have a race to catch us!" cried Barney.

And he put on all speed. The boat ran on like lightning and the whale pursued it.

The monster overtook the boat and gave it a glancing blow on the side.

Frank saw that something desperate had got to be done.

So he called all into the pilot-house. Each stood upon a stool with glass legs, and Frank pressed a button which sent the electric current into the steel hull.

The whale turned and came again for another glancing blow.

He met with a hot reception this time, to be sure. It must have been a momentary surprise.

The moment he touched the boat there was a shock, a terrific recoil and the water boiled like a caldron.

The whale shot off several yards from the boat and appeared to be in the throes of death. It quivered and struggled violently and lay upon its back.

"It is a death blow!" cried the doctor. "What power there is in electricity."

"Don't be too sure of it," cried Frank, "death should be instantaneous."

"Begorra, he's coming to loife already," cried Barney.

This was seen to be true enough for the whale slowly and convulsively regained an upright position and then swam rapidly away.

It did not renew its attack upon the submarine boat.

There was no doubt but that it had had all the nonsense knocked out of it, and was bound to respect its powerful antagonist.

One thing was sure, it had been a very close call for the Pearl. A straight blow would have likely sealed its fate.

Nothing more was seen of the whale. It went out of sight and the Pearl went her way.

Barney crowded on speed now and for some miles the boat ran fast.

Then the sandy plain began to ascend.

High cliffs suddenly formed just ahead and as the boat passed over these a great cry went up.

"Great Scott!" cried Frank. "A city under the sea!"

"A city!" gasped the doctor.

The scene spread to the view of the voyagers was like a page from a book of fairy tales.

There, down in a little valley was a city of whitest stone. It gleamed like a radiant vision in the glare of electric lights.

There were high buildings, towers, domes and minarets. Broad paved streets intersected each other. A high wall of defense surrounded the city.

A city under the sea!
What did it mean?

For a moment this puzzled the voyagers. Then they solved the mystery in a logical manner.

Had this city been built by merman and mermaid or some deep sea dwellers who were of an intelligence on a par with the upper world?

But the improbability of this thought was at once apparent. There was no sign of life in the deep sea city.

No people were there. It was a city of death.

It had doubtless been built by human hands and above the surface of the sea.

But some internal commotion of the earth's crust had caused the continent or isle upon which it had stood to sink beneath the sea.

Of course, this had sealed its fate. But what a fearful end for the thriving inhabitants.

It was a powerful spell which for some while held the voyagers.

Frank was the first to speak.

"No doubt that city was built many hundred years ago!"

"Then we are above a sunken continent," said Dr. Calliope.

"That is true!"

"But—what wonderful stone that is of which the city is built! It looks like coral!"

"It is doubtless ordinary stone encrusted with coral," said Frank.

"The effect is beautiful!"

"That must have required centuries of work by the insects."

"Indeed, yes! There must be little left of the city save these silent white buildings."

The submarine boat now sailed down over the wonderful city, and a closer look at it was taken.

"Judging from its extent fully half a million people must have lived here once!" averred the doctor.

"No doubt of it!" agreed Frank.

"But what could have supported such a metropolis?"

"No doubt the country about it."

"Mercy on us! It is a miserable looking region!"

"Yes, at present. But this great waste of sand may once have been fertile soil, with waving fields of grain and rich gardens, yielding wealth for the inhabitants."

"It does not look possible."

"Yet it is likely."

"But nothing would grow in that sand."

"Ah, but it may not have always been sand hereabouts. The sand I suppose was created by the action of the water or brought here by an undertow."

The doctor nodded his head.

"That is a very logical argument," he said. "What a nation it must have been? Is it not curious that we have no historical record of it?"

"Not so very!" declared Frank. "When you call to mind that the new world was only discovered a few hundred years ago. This city and the continent may have sunk before Columbus crossed the sea."

"Ah, that is certainly logical," agreed the doctor, scratching his head, "but it is not in the right location for the sunken Atlantis."

"Yet it may have sunk at the same time, or been even a distant part of that continent. Who shall say?"

"Well, I vul!" muttered the doctor. "Wonders are growing! What will come next?"

Whatever was in store in the way of wonders, it was not easy to guess, but a thrilling incident was close at hand.

The boat seemed suddenly sinking. Barney reversed the tank lever, but that did no good.

It seemed as if the sea was suddenly thrown into some violent and fearful commotion. It was a moment of mystery—of intense surprise and excitement.

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW ISLAND.

WHAT did it mean?

What had happened?

Or rather what was happening at that moment? The query was stamped on the pale faces of all in the party.

"On my word!" cried the doctor, "I believe it is a tidal wave!"

"More likely an earthquake!" cried Frank. "Look out all!"

It seemed as if the bottom of the ocean was rising to strike the bottom of the boat.

But this was regarded as an optical delusion.

The general belief was instinctively that the boat was sinking. Down she went, or rather up came the bottom of the sea.

The water was in a literal tempest making a terrific furor. The submarine boat was tossed about like a mere toy.

But an explanation of the situation was not long in coming. Suddenly the buildings of such crystal white began to reel and tumble.

"An earthquake!" yelled Frank.

The boat was wedged in between two buildings. At the moment it seemed impossible to extricate her.

But the next moment the electric lights paled.

A great shout went up from the doctor.

"Wonderful!" he cried. "We are going to the surface! The water is receding!"

Indeed, this seemed to be the case.

The next moment a most astounding state of affairs was revealed.

A waste of tumbling, heaving waters, a brassy sky and glaring sun, and a waste of sand and coral-encrusted buildings were seen upon all sides.

They were no longer at the bottom of the sea. By a most inexplicable bit of magic they had been lifted into daylight and the upper world.

What was the meaning of the strange phenomenon? What had happened to place them thus high and dry from the ocean depths?

The mighty tumbling waste of waters receded from the newly arisen isle, so long buried at the bottom of the sea.

Gradually they ceased their commotion, and the land lost its rocking motion.

Then the sun began to absorb the water in the hollows of the rocks, and the sea became a dead calm. The Equatorial Sea held a new isle restored after many centuries.

This became all apparent to the voyagers in a brief space of time. It required some little space, however, for them to recover equanimity.

Fortunately no one had been injured.

Neither was the submarine boat at all injured, though it lay high and dry between two of the coral buildings.

"By the soul of Plato!" gasped the doctor, "we have escaped unharmed, and are the fortunate witnesses of a most remarkable phenomenon!"

"You are right!" agreed Frank, "it is a miracle!"

"Begorra, but it's badly sthuck we are!" cried Barney. "Shure, howiver will we git out av this pickle?"

"I done tink it am all a big dream," averred Pomp, pinching himself to make sure. "I kain't understand it."

"I don't wonder," said Frank, "it is certainly a marvelous freak of Dame Nature."

"The boat seems to be unharmed," declared the doctor.

"Not injured in the least," said Frank, "but—"

He made a wry face and all exchanged glances.

"On my word," said the doctor, "it looks as if we were relegated here to stay, Frank."

"That will put an end to our submarine explorations."

"Then we are castaways?"

"Sure."

"And like Robinson Crusoe must watch vainly for a passing sail."

"Ah; I fear that vessels seldom come into these seas!"

"That is a bad outlook for us."

The doctor walked to the rail of the submarine boat and looked over.

"Is there no way to dislodge the vessel?" he asked. "Can we not launch her again?"

Frank looked dubiously at the full two hundred yards of distance to the water's edge, and said ruefully:

"It does not look very encouraging. However, we will see what can be done."

All now clambered down from the Pearl's deck.

It was seen that she rested lightly between the buildings and had suffered no serious strain.

This was certainly encouraging. The spirits of all arose.

But before taking any steps toward launching the boat again, the curiosity of all demanded a brief tour about the new made isle.

The streets of the coral city lay before them.

Some of the buildings had been shattered and had fallen, but the majority were intact.

It was now seen that their antiquity was very great.

They had doubtless been built many hundreds of years previously. They were two stories in height, with roof gardens and high porticos.

The architecture was of a style not known to either the Greek or Roman school. This was evidence that the island people were of a race entirely separate from any other on earth.

Whether white, black, or Mongolian, it was not easy to say, but the doctor after some study, said:

"It is my opinion that these people were white of skin and well advanced in civilization."

"Is it not a pity that we can find no other identifying marks of them?" said Frank. "Only the empty buildings and paved streets are left."

"That is true!"

"How do we know whether they understood the use of metals? Why do we not find some of their articles of domestic or warlike use?"

"That is easily explained," said the doctor. "The action of the water and lapse of time, would be sufficient to remove all such trace."

"You think so?"

"Why, we know it in the absence of any remains. Everything has gone to decay but these walls, which have only been preserved intact by the work of the coral insects."

"It is a pity," was all Frank could say.

They wandered on down the streets of the coral city.

Many strange things were seen.

The city had been the home of many strange fish and marine creatures.

These, taken so suddenly from their element, were in some cases dead or dying.

In others they were seeking to crawl back into the sea.

There were huge crabs of the strangest description and colors; mighty jellyfish, voracious looking creatures, akin to the cuttlefish, and as they turned the corner of one street Frank gripped the doctor's arm.

"Look out!" he cried.

"What?"

"Danger!"

"Soul of Aristotle! I should say so!" gasped the scientist.

There extended along the entire length of the street was a mighty, sinuous body which the voyagers were certain was the sea serpent itself.

Its fearful proportions exceeded anything they had ever seen before, and there was little wonder that they experienced terror.

"Golly!" gasped Pomp, beating a retreat. "Look out fo' dat big snake! It am dead shuah a boa-constrictor!"

"Begorra, phwat's that?" asked Barney, in a puzzled manner.

"Don' yo' know nuffit', l'ish? It am a big snake dat will jes' squeeze yo' all to pieces fo' a cent!"

"Ugh!" grunted the Celt. "The devil take him, thin! Shure I'll kape out av his way!"

"Nonsense!" cried the doctor impatiently. "It is no snake, you scare-crows!"

"Shure, thin, phwat the devil is it?" asked Barney.

"Nothing but a giant eel of a species unknown and unclassified. On my word, is he not a monster, Frank?"

"You are right," agreed the young inventor, who had been attentively studying the creature; "for an eel that beats the world."

"It surely does!"

"It has the look of a serpent, and yet, one can see by the dorsal fin and the gills that it is a fish. Ah, look out, everybody!"

The warning was well timed.

The mighty monster made a sudden spasmodic move. The result was that its huge tail crushed in the coral wall of one of the buildings. Wriggling, with a force which made the ground tremble, the giant eel got under way.

This brought the doctor to his senses.

"Shoot!" he cried, "don't let him get away. His skin will be worth a king's fortune for exhibition in America."

Fortunately they had all provided themselves with rifles before leaving the Pearl.

Shots were at once fired at the eel.

But they seemed not to hinder the monster in his course even if they took effect, for he kept on his cumbersome way to the sea.

"Look out! he will escape us!" cried the doctor. "Aim for his head!"

"Be jabbers, I've foired at it twicet," cried Barney, "but devil an impression kin I make on it."

And this sort of luck waited upon all. In spite of the rapid shots the huge monster slid down over the half mile of sands to the sea.

Into the water he slid, making a terrific commotion, and then was out of sight in an instant.

Only a long ridge of foam marked his disappearance. He was never seen again by any in the party.

The doctor was bitterly disappointed.

"It is hard luck!" he cried. "I would have given anything for his skin. Imagine what a sensation it would create on exhibition in New York."

"Indeed, that is true," agreed Frank, "but he was a little too smart for us!"

"So indeed he was. Never mind! we may find something just as wonderful yet," was the professor's consoling thought.

CHAPTER IV.

A STRANGE MONSTER.

THE party continued their explorations of the island at some length.

Then after all had grown weary and hungry it was proposed to return to the boat.

This was done.

Pomp proceeded to spread himself in the setting forth of a fine repast. This was much appreciated and ample justice was done it by the others.

Much refreshed, all sat out on deck that evening and enjoyed the balmy air which drifted across the newly made isle.

Pomp produced his banjo and Barney his fiddle.

Between them they furnished rare entertainment for a while. The moon hung high in a beautiful sky all the while.

"Indeed, life on the equator is not the worst thing in the world," declared Frank Reade, Jr.

"You have not seen all its phases yet," said the doctor cautiously, "do not pass judgment upon it until you have spent at least a year upon the earth's dividing line."

"No doubt that is good advice," agreed Frank, "but so far it has been enjoyable."

"Wha' am de programme fo' to-morrow, Marse Frank?" asked Pomp.

"To-morrow!" exclaimed the young inventor. "We must try and launch the submarine boat again."

"Berry good, sah!"

"Do you apprehend much difficulty?" asked the doctor.

"I apprehend some hard work," replied Frank. "We may even have to enlist you!"

"I am quite ready!" declared the savant. "Make any use of me which you choose!"

A short while later all retired.

As there were no inhabitants or perils on the isle to be feared apparently, it was not deemed necessary to keep a watch.

But Barney slept in the pilot house, while Pomp was ensconced in the forward turret to be ready in case of a disturbance.

Soon all were locked in the embrace of deepest slumber; and while they slept, the wind sighed sadly across the boat's deck, the seas swayed upon the sands of the island shore, and the moon made all like day upon the isle.

Some hours passed.

It must have been in one of the early morning hours that a very strange thing happened.

Suddenly from the sea, at a point just below, there emerged a strange giant form.

It was a living creature, but, heavens, what a literal monster it was!

Its body was like that of an elephant, its long giant claws could crush almost anything, and its greenish eyes were like the glare of lamps in the dim light.

This nondescript habitant of the deep came crawling out upon the island shore.

It chanced at that moment that Barney awoke. The moon was shining full in his face.

This might have been the cause of his waking; but, however, it was something prompted him to glance out of the window.

And the sight which met his gaze was of a sort calculated to chill the marrow in one's bones.

He gave a gasp of terror.

"Mithar av Moses!" he chattered. "Am I dhraming or am I woide awake?"

He dared to look again.

There was no mistake. What he saw was a living reality. His teeth chattered like castanets.

"Phwat the devil is it?" he muttered. "Shure I niver see the loikes av that afore!"

The mysterious marine monster was crawling out of the water upon the sands of the island.

Once out, it paused a moment as if to take a look at things about. Then, as if satisfied with the outlook, it began to crawl slowly toward the submarine boat.

Barney could not help but lie where he was for some moments, utterly unable to move hand or foot.

Then he overcome the curious spell and bounded from his bunk.

"Help! foire! murder!" he screamed. "Shure, Mithar Frank, come quick fer the loife av yez!"

As it chanced Barney was near the push button which operated the electric alarm gong.

He touched this, which instantly began ringing furiously. It is needless to say that the voyagers were brought out of their slumbers.

They came tumbling out in the greatest of excitement. Frank Reade, Jr. was the first on deck.

Barney had gone to find an elephant rifle.

The doctor came close behind Frank and Pomp next. The sight they beheld was surely enough to fill them with terror.

"Shades of Plato!" gasped the doctor. "What is that?"

"Name it if you can!" cried Frank.

"The great sanrian of the Pliocene epoch!" declared the doctor, adjusting his glasses. "No, by Jupiter, it is no saurian or reptile. It is—it is a giant crab."

"A giant crab!" cried Frank, excitedly. "Whoever heard of such a thing?"

"Yet that is what it is," averred the doctor, positively. "Mercy on us, this beats all the records of natural history or science! Whoever saw such a creature as that before?"

"Whatever it is," cried Frank, wildly, "it surely means harm to this boat! We have no time to lose, and must make quick action."

"What shall we do?"

"Why, open fire on the creature! Anything—everything, only don't let it come aboard of us!"

"Begorra, here goes!" cried Barney, as he fired at the monster.

The bullet struck the hard shell of the giant crab, but rattled off like a pebble.

A dozen shots were thus fired without avail.

Then Frank cried:

"Aim for the eye! Take steady aim and hit it!"

This was no difficult thing to do. The creature's eyes were as big as saucer plates.

Meanwhile, the creature had evidently sighted the boat, and was making it a mark. It was coming straight for it.

Frank knew well what damage might occur if that giant form should pile itself upon the boat. Its weight would be enough to crush the plates of the boat.

There was only one hope, and this was to arrest the progress of the creature before it could reach the Pearl.

But, singularly enough, the rifle balls did not take effect. They rattled from the creature's shell like hail stones.

But Frank picked up his elephant rifle and placed an explosive shell in it.

Then he took deliberate and careful aim at the creature's eye. He pulled the trigger.

The shot went true to the mark. It struck the crab full in its right eye. There was an explosion, a scattering of fluid—the sight of that eye was destroyed. This was the first evidence of pain given by the creature. It reeled, made a spasmodic plunge, and the ground shook. At the same moment it wildly clawed the air.

A cheer went up. "Now hit the other eye!" cried the doctor; "then we will have him truly hors du-combat!"

"All roight," cried Barney, "here's bad cess to the crather?" Crack! The Celt's rifle spoke. Another cheer went up from the crowd. It was a capital shot.

The eyesight of the foe was destroyed. This was an advantage. But the struggle went no further. The crab, infuriated and frantic with pain, made a blind and maddening rush away at right angles.

This took it toward a high cliff which overhung the sea. The castaways gave chase.

But the giant crab easily outfooted its pursuers. It went careering madly to the verge of the cliff. The next moment it was over the verge.

Down into the sea it went with a terrific splash and disappeared beneath the waves.

It was not seen again. Gathered on the brow of the cliff the submarine voyagers were disposed to congratulate themselves wildly on the narrow escape.

"Be jabbers, it's lucky I woke up in toime to see the crather," cried Barney.

All agreed to this. "Well," said Frank, "it will pay us to keep a watch on deck after this. But I thought of no such peril!"

However, there was no more sleep for the party that morning. They returned in the moonlight to the deck.

Plans for getting the boat off the island were now discussed. With the coming of daylight these were elaborated. They were the result of Frank Reade, Jr.'s ingenuity.

The distance to the water was full two hundred yards. To attempt to drag the boat that distance through the sand was out of the question.

Frank had a better plan. He was a skilled engineer.

At a glance he saw the lay of the land and just how to take advantage of all natural advantages.

The interval to the ocean was slightly sloping. It also was something in the nature of a ravine.

Doctor Calliope's plan was to dig a canal to the keel of the boat and then float her out. But this would require an endless amount of work.

So Frank hit upon what he believed would be an easier and better plan.

Two hundred yards further into the interior, and at a height some feet above the level of the stranded boat, was a body of water.

It lay in a deep hollow, and had been left there by the rise of the isle.

Its natural course, were it to escape its bonds would be directly down through this lower ravine in which the submarine boat was, and a channel could be made directly between these buildings to the sea.

Frank saw the point at once. He also discovered that a very little explosion of blast of dynamite would set the imprisoned body of water free. This in its course should take the submarine boat safely down to the sea.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE DEEP SEA CAVE.

No sooner had he seen this vantage point, than Frank decided upon it as his best move.

He at once drew his lines and made a mental survey. A few moments later all were at work.

A blast of dynamite opened a gap in the city wall so that a straight channel was made from the lake.

Several of the buildings were also blown up.

Excavations were made and a general channel roughly established. Then preparations were made for the liberating of the lake.

It was an immense body of water and would make a literal flood down through the channel to the sea.

Everything in its course should be carried before it, including, as Frank hoped, the Pearl.

All preparations were made. Frank went aboard the Pearl and all were on her deck waiting for the grand denouement.

It was an exciting moment. Frank held in his hand the electric key which was to liberate the great lake.

A touch upon it, and—

"Merciful powers!" gasped the doctor; "look at that!"

It was a thrilling spectacle.

Up into the air like a volcano rose the dynamite blast. The terrific rent made in the cliff was sufficient.

The next moment a thrilling scene was enacted.

Down over the rocks came the immense body of water like a liberated sea.

Down in terrific surges! The voyagers held their breath. What would be the result when they should strike the boat? Would they be dashed to pieces?

It was a critical moment. All retreated into the cabin and closed the hermetically sealed doors.

Frank was at the wheel. The time between the breaking of the barrier and the striking of the boat by the waters was brief.

Down between the narrow white walls came the flood with frightful power.

It caught the submarine boat fairly under the keel.

There was one brief instant of doubt, and then—Eureka! the submarine boat was above the crest of the surges on its way to the sea.

Down through the channel it went like a meteor. Round and round it was whirled, then the surges made one continuous flood of water to the sea.

The Pearl shot far out into the ocean. It was as buoyant as a feather, and soon was beyond the danger of swamping.

Frank Reade, Jr.'s launching plan had been a success. The voyagers were so delighted that they could not help a hearty cheer.

A last look was taken at the island, then Frank ran the boat several miles out to sea, and cried:

"Down she goes! Be ready all!"

And down she went. Down and down into the ocean depths with a jerky motion. Now she was in sight of the bottom.

An immense sandy plain was seen. How far it extended there was no way of guessing.

But now the boat began to act strangely.

"How she wabbles," cried the doctor. "What is the matter, Frank?"

"I am sure I do not see," replied the young inventor, "let us take a look at the indicator."

Then the inventor gave a great start; this did not record that they were making any progress whatever.

What did it mean? Frank reversed the dial-plate.

Then this revealed an astounding fact; in spite of the forward motion of the propeller, they were sliding backwards at the rate of full ten miles an hour.

Frank looked out into the sea and at the bottom.

His theory was confirmed. Though the boat's engines were in full play to send her forward, some powerful action was dragging her backwards. What could it be?

"Great Scott!" suddenly exclaimed Frank. "I see it! We are in an undertow!"

"An undertow!" exclaimed the doctor.

"Yes, and I think it will trouble us to get out of it."

"What sort of an undertow? Where will it take us?"

"Mercy knows! perhaps it is a deep sea labyrinth or maelstrom, and will keep us constantly whirling in a circle!"

"Caesar's ghost!" exclaimed the doctor, "that is a bad state of affairs!"

"Well, yes, unless we can get out of the maelstrom."

"Can we do that?"

"We can try!"

Frank tried to expel the water from the tank so that the boat would rise. In this he was successful.

But it was not ordained that she should go to the surface. As she rose suddenly there was a terrific crash, a scraping sound, things went smashing about in the cabin and the boat was motionless.

"Heavens!" cried Frank. "What is the matter?"

He switched the electric light upwards. A glance was enough. The turret poles were smashed. The tops of the turrets were wedged against a wall or roof of stone.

"Mercy!" ejaculated the young inventor; "we are in a deep sea cave."

"A cave!" repeated the doctor.

"Yes, and we have run against the roof of it."

"Any harm done?"

"Smashed the flag-masts and the turret rails!" declared Frank; "that is all."

Quickly the young inventor touched the tank lever and the boat sank.

He also put all force into the engines.

But it was of no use. They were not powerful enough to stem that awful current which set through the deep sea cavern.

To attempt exit from the place in that manner was out of the question.

Here was a situation. Driven into a deep sea cave by a powerful undertow which they could not stem.

What would be the result? Were they buried for life in a deep sea cave? Was there no escape for them? Was not their fate sealed?

All these questions occurred to Frank Reade, Jr. For once in his life he was completely puzzled.

But he said nothing to the others of any possible fears he might have. He did not deem it advisable.

One thing he noted with satisfaction; the deeper into the cave they proceeded, the less strong grew the undertow.

Soon it had ceased altogether. Frank computed that they had come a distance of fifty miles or more.

This meant that the deep sea cave was of tremendous depth and extent; now that the boat was in calm water, other passages were seen leading from it.

Frank suddenly brought the boat to a halt.

He was never in a more distressing predicament in his life; what should he do?

To get out of the cave by the way they had come was impossible; here was a startling catastrophe.

Unless the cave had another possible outlet, their position was of a grimly serious character. It would seem as if they were buried alive.

A cold sweat broke out upon Frank Reade, Jr.

This was a little the worst predicament he ever got into in all his life. However, there was but one thing to do.

This was to find an outlet to the cave if possible. So he started the boat ahead slowly.

As he did this he felt a touch on his arm.

He turned about.

It was the doctor.

The savant's face wore a serious expression. There was a frightened look in his eyes as he said:

"Where are we, Frank?"

"Mercy knows. I do not!" replied the young inventor, "but I think that confounded undertow carried us into a deep sea cave!"

"Can we get out?"

"I cannot say!"

The two men looked at each other blankly for some moments. Each read the thoughts of the other.

"In a deep sea cave!" muttered the doctor; "it is not a pleasant thing to contemplate. But there must be an outlet else there could be no undertow."

"I am not so sure of that," said Frank, "remember that the undertow ceases right here!"

This was true. There was no further circulation of the water, which in this part of the cavern was in a dead calm.

The submarine boat was held stationary for awhile. The search-light's rays were sent in every direction.

There were other passages leading off from the main cavern. Where they might lead to it was not easy to guess.

In fact the cavern looked like a veritable labyrinth, with scant show of the party ever emerging alive.

This terrible conclusion was finally arrived at, after some discussion.

"We are buried alive!" groaned the doctor, with earnest conviction. "I tell you we shall never see home or friends again!"

"Then this is to be our fate," said Frank, lugubriously.

"Ain' dere no way fo' to git out, gemmens?" asked Pomp.

"Shure, I don't believe Marse Frank am gwine fo' to git stuck yere."

"Begorra, I'll wager Mистер Frank will settle the question!" cried Barney, confidently.

But Frank only smiled sadly.

"I don't know about that," he said, dubiously. "I am not omnipotent by any means. The situation is a most desperate one. However, we will hope for the best."

And with this, the young inventor walked away.

The others gazed silently after him. They still had confidence in his ability to extricate them from their present predicament.

"He will find a way out of it," said the doctor, confidently.

"Bejabbers, it'll be the fast toime he was iver sthuck," declared Barney, "an' I've seen him in a wuss fix nor this!"

"Golly, dat am so," agreed Pomp. "Jes' when eberything looks de wurst, Marse Frank he pull out easy enuff!"

CHAPTER VI.

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

BUT Frank Reade, Jr., had not the confidence in his ability to pull out of this predicament that the others had.

He went into his private cabin, and spent a long while in careful thought and study.

But to no avail.

He could see but one way—but one method of action. This was simply to keep the boat on the go and look for an outlet.

If they did not succeed in finding it, then their fate was sealed.

He at one time considered the feasibility of blowing up the cavern roof.

But when he reflected that this might be hundreds of feet thick he could see the folly of such a move.

"No," he ejaculated finally; "there is but one way, and that is to search until an outlet is found. That surely ought not to be difficult."

So he returned to the pilot house and went to the keyboard. The boat moved slowly forward.

"Then you have decided upon a move, Frank?" asked the doctor.

"The only feasible one of which I can conceive," replied the young inventor; "we will live in hope."

The submarine boat moved on through the recesses of the cave. On, and on it wandered.

But on every hand there were the same forbidding walls of stone encrusted with marine growth.

One thing seemed certain. They were every moment getting deeper and deeper into the place.

Perhaps it extended even to the very center of the earth. It certainly looked to be a certainty that none in the party would see daylight again.

They could live perhaps a year aboard the submarine boat, that is barring accidents.

There were provisions for about that length of time.

The chemical generators ought to endure for an indefinite period. The boat itself ought not to go into decay for many years.

But after the provisions were exhausted, what was to support life? This was the question.

Fishing might be resorted to; but the evil of one diet must necessarily prove fatal in course of time.

Then starvation would come; it was a horrible thought.

A day passed.

Then another day; still the boat kept groping on. Then a week drifted by.

All this while there was no sign of an outlet from the place. But there came a change which was something of a relief.

The eternal narrow passage suddenly widened, and the boat sailed into an open underground sea.

The same rocky roof was above them, but there was surface to the water and the boat ascended to it.

It floated upon the surface of the strange underground sea; the doors were opened and all went out on deck.

The air of the cavern was singularly dry and warm; the search-light shooting in every direction showed a boundless waste.

But straight overhead at a height of several hundred feet was the roof of the mighty cavern.

"This is truly wonderful!" cried the doctor, for a while regaining his spirits. "I wonder if this sea is on a level with the sea outside?"

"Not necessarily!" replied Frank, "if it were we should know that we were under some great body of land, such as a large island or continent."

"In that case why is not this cavern chamber entirely filled with water?"

"You ought to be scientist enough to answer that question," replied Frank, with a laugh, "it is probably the pressure of the air here compressed which prevents it."

The doctor said no more, but he was very thoughtful.

Meanwhile the submarine boat sailed on over the underground sea. Suddenly the search-light revealed a startling thing.

Barney was the first to see it. He gave a great cry:

"Look, Mистер Frank!" he cried. "Shure, it's a loight over there."

"A light?" exclaimed the young inventor in surprise.

"Yis, sor!"

"Where is it?"

But even as he asked the question Frank saw it. Barney was right. There certainly was visible in the distance a faint blaze of light. It looked like the flame of a torch at that distance.

"Bear down for it," cried Frank. "We must find out what it is."

"All right, sor!"

The submarine boat accordingly bore down for the distant light. As they drew nearer, the search-light was again turned upon it.

A great cry went up.

"Land!" cried the doctor.

Such it was, a rocky cliff-bound coast in that underground sea. Upon one of the cliffs the light burned.

As the boat drew nearer all on board were puzzled, as to the nature of the strange light.

It was seen at once that it could not be the light of a torch simply, for it was much too large for that.

More likely it was a bonfire, but the question arose, how could a bonfire be created without the aid of human hands?

And could it be possible that human beings occupied this underground world? It seemed incredible.

Nearer drew the Pearl to the strange phenomenon.

And now the blaze was seen to rise many feet into the air. There was a dull, rumbling sound, and steam formed on the glass of the observation windows.

"That is curious!" cried Frank. "We are in warm water. It must register one hundred degrees."

The air became oppressive in the cabin, so all remained out on deck.

Until the boat was within a quarter of a mile of the strange fire the problem was unsolved. Then the mystery was explained.

Above the cliff's verge there rose a small cone. From this fire, smoke and ashes were hurled toward the roof of the cavern.

"On my honor!" cried the doctor, "it is a miniature volcano!"

"So it is!" cried Frank, "truly that is a wonder!"

"A wonder, indeed!" cried the doctor. "An underground volcano, or under sea—which will you call it?"

"Either," said Frank; "but is it not a spiteful little chap?"

The eruption was certainly a lively one for so small a cone. It lasted for full an hour, and the voyagers watched it all the while.

Then it gradually died out and left only a terrible smudge of soot and ashes.

The underground island, for such it was seen to be, was high cliffed and rocky.

Of course there was no vegetation. All was sand and ledges.

The submarine boat sailed slowly around the island. The doctor was much interested. He proposed visiting the island for a bit of exploration. To this Frank could only consent.

So the Pearl drew as near the shore as she dared, and one of her boats was put over the rail.

The doctor, Frank and Barney entered it. Pomp was to remain aboard the Pearl.

The boat was quickly rowed to the sandy beach of the island. Then the voyagers leaped out.

The doctor ran eagerly up the cliffs. The search light made a broad path of radiance across the isle.

In this the adventurers could conduct their exploration as well as in the light of day.

The doctor found valuable specimens and curious works of Nature at almost every step, where neither Frank or Barney would think of looking.

"Bejabbers, mebbe yez will foind a gold mine yet!" cried the Celt.

"Perhaps so!" cried the doctor. Then he gave a sudden exclamation and ran nimbly to a pile of bowlders near.

Over these he leaped and disappeared from view.

Frank and Barney waited for some while expecting him to reappear. But time passed by.

He did not appear.

"Soul of Plato!" exclaimed Frank, using the doctor's favorite expression. "What has become of him, Barney?"

"Begorra, Misther Frank, mebbe we had betther see about it."

"You are right."

Together they reached the bowlders and looked for the doctor. He was not there.

What did it mean?

Frank and Barney searched the vicinity assiduously. Not a trace of him could be found.

He had disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up; and, indeed, Frank half suspected this might have happened.

But no trap or pitfall was found.

They looked for his tracks, but the ground was too pebbly to show them.

Frank raised his voice:

"Hello!"

Again and again he shouted.

"Phwere are yez, docther?" yelled Barney.

But no answer came back. The search was continued for a wide radius about.

"Well, I'm beat!" exclaimed the young inventor. "I don't understand it at all. What has become of him?"

Barney scratched his head dubiously.

"It's two to one, sor, that some dragon was behoid these rocks an' jist grabbed him an' carried him off!"

Frank had to laugh.

"That is quite likely, Barney," he said; "what a nice meal the dragon had."

"Arrah, I don't know," retorted the Celt. "I'm afther thinkin' it'll tire his jaws a bit."

But yet the disappearance of the doctor was no joking matter. He was certainly in trouble somewhere.

Frank felt sure of this.

Again and again he called his name. But yet no answer.

Frank walked down the slope a ways, leaving Barney standing near the spot where the doctor had been last seen.

"It is very queer!" he exclaimed. "What was your last view of him, Barney?"

Frank as he asked this question was looking in another direction. He was obliged to repeat it.

But yet no answer.

Astonished, he turned his head to meet with a shock. Barney was not in sight. He had also mysteriously disappeared.

CHAPTER VII.

STRANGE EXPERIENCES.

Words can hardly describe the sensations of Frank Reade, Jr., as he realized the thrilling truth.

"Barney!" he shouted.

"Where are you?"

Again and again he called. But he might as well have saved himself the trouble.

For the Celt did not answer.

A queer chill seized Frank.

What terrible mystery was this?

What strange power was there on the isle which could thus bodily transport and conceal in a second of time any human being on the isle?

How did he know but that this mysterious power might select him for the next victim?

It was not at all improbable. Slowly and cautiously he ascended the slope.

When he reached the bowlders he knelt down and made a close examination of the ground. He was thus engaged when a strange sound came to his ears.

It was a distant hullo; he at once answered it.

The call seemed to come from far away in the gloomy part of the isle. It was repeated again and again.

Frank kept answering.

It drew momentarily near and then the young inventor gave a sharp cry.

"Why, it is Barney!" he exclaimed.

Even as he spoke a familiar form shot out of the gloom; in an instant he saw that it was Barney.

The Celt came staggering up the slope and his manner was that of one completely exhausted.

"Barney," cried Frank. "Mercy on us! What has happened to you?"

"Begorra, Misther Frank, I niver can tell yez all. Shure, I can't remimber all av it."

The Celt then detailed a strange and thrilling experience. Frank listened to it with wonderment.

He had stood near one of the stone pillars and was watching Frank. He carelessly leaned back against the stone. The next moment he was shooting down through the darkness.

Then he fell into a terrible swift current of water.

It hurled him on and on through blackness, he knew not whither.

He was fortunately a good swimmer.

This enabled him to keep afloat, and suddenly he shot out into the open air and into smoother water.

Striking out, he reached land, and then, guided by Frank's shouts, he made his way to this spot.

"Well," said Frank, after he had finished, "there is only one clear explanation of your experience."

"Well, sor?"

"At the base of that bowlder there must be a trap. You probably fell through it and into the waters of an underground river. It carried you for some ways underground and finally into the open air."

"Shure, sor, that's phwat I believe," declared the Celt.

"In that case, what of the doctor?"

"Shure, sor, I'm afraid the poor old gentleman is drowned."

"Let us hope not!" cried Frank, hopefully, "first let me take a look at that bowlder."

This he proceeded to do.

He approached it cautiously and slightly pushed it. The trick was almost instantly explained.

As the bowlder was pushed it swayed back a ways, showing an aperture in the ground with slippery sides of moss and slime.

The bowlder was so nicely balanced between two other stones, that a slight touch easily moved it.

"Aha!" cried Frank, "this explains the whole mystery."

He knelt down, while Barney held the stone back and listened at the orifice.

Far below he heard the gurgling of water. He also fancied he could see it gleaming.

This fact settled, a more serious question arose.

This concerned the fate of the doctor.

What was it?

Was he dead, drowned in the underground river, or might he not have also escaped as Barney had?

This was a problem not easily solved. Yet Frank undertook it.

"We must find the outlet to this river," he said. "Do you think you can return to it, Barney?"

"Yis, sor!" replied the Celt, readily. "Shure I know ivery shtep av the way!"

"Let us go thither at once then!"

"Shure do yez belave the poor docther is aloive?"

"We can only ascertain by making a search for him. If he is alive he would be hardly able to make his way over here as quickly as you have!"

"Shure, sor, yez are roight there," declared Barney. "I'm wid yez, sor!"

This settled the matter.

Barney led the way down the slope. Soon they reached the border of the path of electric light.

But Frank had a pocket lantern with a storage battery with him. This he turned on and it gave light enough to show them their way.

On they traveled over rough surface until suddenly Barney turned an angle of a cliff wall and cried:

"Shure, sor, here we are! Phwat do yez think av it?"

Frank saw the waters of a swift river rushing out from the deep mouth of a cavern.

It was the outlet of the underground stream, and through which Barney had pluckily swam.

The young inventor sent the rays of his lantern as far out over the water as he could.

"Well," he said finally, "there is no doubt but that the doctor emerged at this point."

"Yis, sor."

"Dead or alive?"

"Shure, sor."

"Then if we do not find him alive, we may at least find his body along the shore somewhere."

"We kin look sor."

"That is right."

Along the bank of the river the two searchers went. They examined every eddy—every part of the shore, and scoured the surface of the river.

It was but a half mile to the delta of the little river.

It was possible that the doctor's body had been carried out to sea.

But Frank still clung to the hope and belief that the savant was yet alive.

Soon they had covered half the distance to the ocean. Then Frank turned quick as a flash.

"Hello!" he cried, "did you hear that, Barney?"

"Hear phwat, sor?" asked the Celt.

"Listen!"

Both listened intently.

Plain to their ears came a distant faint cry. It was remote, but enough to cause a cheer.

"Hurrah!" shouted Frank, "the doctor is alive!"

"Shure, an' he is!" cried Barney, wild with joy. "I'm wid yez, Mither Frank. Lead the way, sor!"

But Frank opened his mouth and shouted at the top of his lungs:

"Doctor, hello! Is it you? Answer, if so!"

The distant faint cry came back again, a trifle louder this time.

"He heard us!" cried Frank, excitedly. "Come on, Barney!"

The Celt needed no second bidding.

Both started away in the direction of the cry, brandishing the electric lantern. On they ran, guided by the distant cries.

They neared the spot from whence they came. This was at a point upon the seashore.

Turning a corner of the cliff they came suddenly upon the object of their search.

There crouched in the sands was Doctor Calliope, pale and exhausted. The savant had done his utmost.

He had dropped quite overcome with the exertion of his long swim, for he had emerged from the underground river even as Barney had.

"Thank God!" declared the doctor, fervently. "I thought my end had come!"

"You are worth a dozen dead men, doctor," cried Frank, cheeringly; "don't lose courage a bit."

"I haven't yet," replied the doctor, warmly. Then he told his story.

His purpose had been to reach the pathway of the search-light. He knew that he would then be all right, for he could find the landing place easily.

But the fearful exhaustion had told upon him, and he had been obliged to almost succumb. The coming of Frank and Barney was opportune.

"Well," cried the young inventor, "have you had enough of exploring this isle?"

"Quite," replied the doctor. "Let us go back to the Pearl."

It is needless to say that Frank and Barney were willing; they found the Pearl's boat and quickly pulled out the Pearl.

Pomp was awaiting them and had a steaming repast in readiness.

It is hardly necessary to say that they did ample justice to this; after which the Pearl went on her way.

The island was the first land they had encountered in the underground sea. But that there were more Frank felt sure.

So a good lookout was kept. The next day at noon, Barney flashed the search-light at right angles and cried, excitedly:

"Land ho! Another island!"

"Land again!" exclaimed Frank in surprise. "How do you know it is an island, Barney?"

"Begorra, I only guessed it," replied the Celt laughingly. "Shure it may be a continent fer all I know."

"Whatever it is, I have no desire to visit it," said the doctor emphatically.

"Then one experience is enough?" asked Frank with a laugh.

"Indeed it is!"

"Nevertheless, let us take a look at this new land," said the young inventor.

So the submarine boat was allowed to approach quite near to the newly discovered land.

The coast extended far beyond the rays of the search-light. If it was an island it certainly was a much larger one than the other.

It was also much more rugged and rocky. It lay directly in the path of the Pearl.

So in the endeavor to go around it the submarine boat sailed along the underground coast.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECOND UNDERTOW.

BUT there seemed no end to the stretch of coast.

The further the Pearl traveled the more precipitous and forbidding became the cliffs.

Then an idea occurred to Frank.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed.

"What is wrong?" asked the doctor.

"We are stumped!"

"What?"

"I mean it!"

"But how so?"

"Why—can't you see? We are at the end of the cavern, at least so far as the water goes. This supposed island is but the end of the cavern."

"By the soul of Apollo!" quoth the doctor, "I never thought of that!"

"I thought so. But I am sure my hypothesis is correct."

"In that case——"

"We are stumped!"

The two men sat down and looked at each other. Finally the doctor said:

"It was an unlucky day when we got into this accursed hole."

"You are right."

"I see but one plan!"

"And that is——"

"To go back the way we came!"

Frank snapped his fingers.

"Folly!" he cried, "it will never do to do that! The best we can do is to try and go under this wall."

"Under?" gasped the doctor.

"Yes. I imagine that there are passages underneath similar to those by which we came here."

"What reason have you for believing that?"

"Well, there are a number of reasons. First, we are in only one huge cavern chamber. There may be and likely are more of the same kind. There must be a way to reach them!"

"I yield!" cried the doctor, "try anything you desire, Frank, but——"

"What?"

"Will you not have to sink the boat again?"

"Certainly, and it may be that we shall not have another chance to reach a surface and upper air like this."

"That would be a pity."

"Indeed yes; but here goes!"

Frank lost no time in carrying out his plan. He was satisfied that they had reached the end of the cavern.

So the doors were hermetically closed, and Frank went into the pilot house.

Down sank the Pearl in the black water. It was much deeper than any one had thought.

Down she sank until Barney suddenly cried:

"Shure, there's the bottom, Mither Frank. Look out, sor!"

Frank held the boat in suspension; then the search-light was sent in every direction.

The bottom of the underground sea presented a curious spectacle.

It was a complete conglomeration of the roughest rocks cut into the most fantastic shapes by the action of the water.

It was like looking down upon the domain of a race of imps, Nothing like it was ever seen before.

"A miniature Hades," cried Frank, "truly that is a queer scene. Calliope!"

"You are right," agreed the professor. "I only wish I could photograph it. There is no beating it for oddity."

"Bejabbers it gives me a shiver," averred Barney, "divil a bit av it fer me!"

There was no good landing place for the Pearl, so she sailed on over the curious region.

Frank held the course as near to the wall of the land as possible. He looked constantly for a subterranean channel or outlet.

The result was that he was suddenly rewarded.

A great cry came from Barney.

"Shure, Mither Frank, there is the passage yez are lookin' fer!"

It did not require a second glance for Frank to see the truth of this. So he cried:

"Right you are, Barney. Bear down for it."

The course of the Pearl was changed. In an instant she was in the deep sea passage.

And a strong current spun her along like a rocket. There was no doubt but that she was being hurried somewhere.

But where?

There was no way of guessing how far the passage went, or what was its end. The trial was made and all the voyagers could do was to await results.

They might be hastening to their doom, or as Frank hoped, on their way out into the open ocean.

At times the walls of the passage would converge and it seemed difficult for the boat to find a way through.

But still they did not narrow sufficiently to prevent the passage altogether. So the Pearl kept on.

The submarine boat followed the passage for what seemed hours.

Then the walls began to expand and a peculiar rocking motion was felt, like the swell of an open body of water.

"Hurrah!" cried Frank. "We are coming out of the trap!"

"Are we?" cried the doctor, delightedly. "What good news."

Barney danced a sand jig and Pomp stood on his head with the exuberance of the occasion.

It was certain that they were emerging from the passage into a larger body of water.

Whether this was an underground sea like the other or not, it was not easy to tell as yet.

Barney put on a little more speed now, and the boat dashed on.

In a few moments it was in the larger body of water.

Frank's orders were:

"Let her go up, Barney!"

"All roight, sor!"

Up the boat rose steadily. But she did not emerge from the depths as in the sea they had just left.

To the contrary, after ascending some few hundred feet Barney jammed the lever back.

He was just in time.

The next moment the boat would have crashed against the roof of the cavern. The water came up full against it. There was no surface as in the sea they had just left.

"Beggorra, Mister Frank!" cried Barney, as he flashed the search-light along the rocky surface, "devil a bit av chance do I see to go higher!"

"You acted just in time, Barney!" cried Frank, "it is a close call. If we had collided with that rocky roof the turrets would have been smashed."

"Which would have been a fatal thing for us!" ventured the doctor.

"Indeed it would," agreed Frank.

"But what shall we do?"

"Descend and proceed a ways further," said Frank, "perhaps the roof may be higher further on!"

Barney obeyed the command.

But one fact was apparent.

There was no doubt that they were in a mere enlargement of the cavern passage. That in fact this was not a mighty underground sea like that they had left.

There was some disappointment at this. But our voyagers had long since learned to treat everything in a philosophical light.

So they awaited fresh developments with a calmness and stoical indifference common to men used to danger.

The passage grew wider as the boat sailed on.

Ever and anon Frank would send the rays of the search-light flashing up to the roof of the cavern. But there was no change.

Two days more passed in aimless wandering in the deep sea cave.

The thing was getting decidedly monotonous, and not one in the party but would have welcomed a change of any kind.

And it came.

Suddenly the boat began to increase its speed; it seemed to fairly leap through the water.

Frank, who was in the cabin, shouted to Barney:

"What the deuce are you running so fast for, Barney?"

"Shure, sor, it's not me that's after doing it," replied Barney.

"Not you?" exclaimed Frank.

"No, sor. Shure I have the engines all the way reversed, sor!"

Frank sprang to his feet.

He glanced out of the observation window and the truth struck him all in a flash.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "We are in another undertow!"

This was certainly the truth.

The submarine boat was running like a veritable meteor in the clutch of the powerful waters. In an instant all were intensely excited.

The doctor was wild.

"By the ghost of Diogenes!" he gasped, "perhaps we are going to run out of the deep sea cave by means of another undertow!"

"That would be a welcome thing," declared Frank.

"Indeed it would."

The boat was now right in the full power of the undertow and running like a railroad train.

Suddenly Barney shot the flash light to the left a trifle, and cried:

"Look there, sor! We are in a narrow passage agin I belave, sor!"

This was seen to be true. Narrow walls of stone were upon either side. They were simply repeating their experience of some days previous.

On and on fled the boat.

The screw was kept busily reversing but this retarded her speed but little.

On and on!

The surprise and fear of the voyagers can hardly be expressed in words.

Each simply held his breath and prayed that there might be no collision.

For what seemed an interminable space of time the boat raced on.

Then there came a sudden shock. It seemed as if the boat was lifted by herculean hands and hurled through space.

The shock broke the electric connections, and the boat was in darkness.

Every one of the voyagers was prostrated by the shock.

In the darkness and confusion it seemed as if the end of all had come.

Cries of terror pealed from their lips.

"Merciful powers!" screamed the doctor. "What has happened? Is this the end—are we dead?"

But this state of affairs did not last long.

The confusion and din ceased, and the submarine boat was motionless.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SUNKEN WRECK.

WHAT had happened?

Where were they?

These were the question which now occurred to all. They did not find immediate answer.

Frank Reade, Jr., was the first to recover himself.

He made quick action.

Scrambling to his feet he groped his way into the pilot-house. He searched vainly for some while for the electric light connections.

Finally he found them.

It was but a moment's work to restore them. The light once more shone forth in the boat's cabin.

This brought the others to their senses. They regained their feet.

"Phwre the devil are we?" cried Barney, confusedly.

"Wha' am de mattah?" gasped Pomp, rubbing his bruised shins.

"That is a question not easily answered just now," declared the doctor, "have a bit of patience."

Frank meanwhile had been regulating the search-light. He now sent its rays out into the gloom.

The result was curious.

A huge black body overhung the boat. It seemed at first like the brow of a cliff.

The Pearl lay half imbedded in a bank of sand. But her bow was jammed under this frowning and overhanging body.

The waters of the undertow had here reached their limit. It was the delta of the underground stream.

Beyond was still water. But at this point were heaps of debris and loose sand and rocks, collected and deposited by the undertow.

"Well, I never!" gasped the doctor as he also scanned the situation. "What have we struck? It looks to me as if we had run into the face of a cliff."

Just then a startled cry escaped Frank's lips.

"I have it!" he cried.

"What?"

"It is not a cliff, nor is it earth or sand. It is the hulk of a wrecked vessel."

For a moment the learned doctor was dumb.

"Merciful Apollo!" he finally gasped. "A sunken ship! How on earth could it have got here? Are we in the open sea again?"

"No," replied Frank, positively.

"Well, then, how did it get here?"

"That is easy enough to see."

"But I don't see it!"

"Doubtless it was brought here by the same powerful current which brought us. That is easy."

The doctor shook his head.

"Our boat is buoyant," he said; "a sunken wreck is not."

"Ah, but it may have been at the time it was brought here. It may have been simply waterlogged."

"Nevertheless it is here," acknowledged the doctor. "Of course you are right, Frank. But what is our situation? Are we stuck?"

"That remains to be seen."

"Can we not break away?"

"We can try. I do not think the boat has suffered any serious harm."

"Thank Heaven for that!"

But now the question arose as to how the exact position of the Pearl was going to be examined and the wreck visited.

"We will pay that old hull a visit," said Frank. "Perhaps we may learn something of her history."

"Ah, but how can we do that?" asked the doctor.

"I will show you."

Frank went into the cabin, and brought out what looked like a heap of rubber coats, helmets, and curious looking copper chests.

The doctor looked curious.

"What have you got there?" he asked.

"You shall see," said Frank, as he began to classify the stuff.

"Diving suits?"

"Yes, sir."

The doctor scratched his head slowly.

"On my word," he said, "I don't see how you can use a diving suit at this depth. Where is your pump?"

"Ah," said Frank, with a smile, "there is the beauty of it. We don't have to use a pump."

"You don't?"

"No."

The doctor was amazed.

"I must own," he said, "that I don't understand you."

"I will explain to you then," said Frank; "these suits are my own invention. I have solved the problem of using a diving suit without pump or line. This you see is the helmet. It is connected by four circulatory pipes with this copper reservoir which is warm on your back."

"Now this reservoir holds a constantly generated fund of fresh air automatically circulated, and furnished by a little chemical generator in the top of the reservoir. The foul air is gotten rid of by a series of valves which expel it."

The doctor carefully and minutely examined the diving suit.

Then he said:

"Frank Reade, Jr., you are the most wonderful man of this age. Nothing is impossible with you."

"I always try for success!" said Frank, modestly, "that is the way to win."

"And with this diving-suit you mean to and can visit that wreck?"

"Yes, and I intend that you shall go with me!"

The doctor winced a trifle.

"Of course it is perfectly safe!" he said.

"Why, of course, else I would not venture it myself."

"That settles it," cried the savant, delightedly. "It is very kind of you, Frank, and I shall not forget it."

It was decided that Frank and the doctor should go alone to the wreck. Barney and Pomp were both to remain aboard the boat.

Frank took a coil of wire with him and a telegraph clicker. By this

means he was to communicate with those on board so that the search-light could be employed to the best advantage.

To leave the boat was now in order.

The two submarine explorers had donned their suits and were all in readiness.

They entered the vestibule now. This was a sort of a small chamber with two hermetically sealed doors.

One opened out upon the deck; the other into the cabin.

Entering the vestibule, the cabin door was closed. Then Frank lightly pressed a valve.

Water flowed into the vestibule and quickly filled it. Then the cabin or deck door was opened, and they walked out on deck.

To return to the cabin was fully as unique an arrangement.

It consisted simply of entering the vestibule and closing the door tightly. Then a rapid action pump absorbed the water in the vestibule.

It was then an easy matter to remove the diving suit and enter the cabin safely.

On the deck of the Pearl the two divers stood for some moments.

The doctor, being a greenhorn, was somewhat distressed by the fearful pressure.

But he soon became better accustomed to this. Frank was, however, an experienced hand.

After some practice, however, the doctor was able to move about with more freedom.

He attempted to converse with Frank, but found this an impossibility.

The only way either could be heard was by placing their helmets close together and shouting.

They now set out to visit the hull of the wrecked ship.

Walking along to the bow of the Pearl, they slid over the rail.

Frank made a brief examination of the position of the Pearl.

He found that the ram of the submarine boat was driven far into the timbers of the wreck.

It did not look to be an easy matter to extricate the boat, but Frank did not attempt to study up the matter just then.

The prime object of the expedition was to explore the sunken hulk.

The doctor now led the way.

Under the vessel's tilted hull they made their way until they had reached the sheer of her bow.

Then the doctor saw a rusted anchor chain hanging down from her head.

He motioned to Frank, and seizing it, began to climb upwards.

What Frank would have warned him of, happened. The chain suddenly parted and the doctor fell.

He fell a distance which in air would have hurt him; but the buoyancy of the water landed him on his feet lightly enough.

"Jemima!" he exclaimed, forgetting his classics for a moment, "that is rather sudden."

Then he remembered that Frank could not hear him.

But he made comprehensive signs to him, and Frank signaled to him to follow.

The young inventor made his way around the bow of the ship to the other side.

As the hulk was tilted that way, the rail was nearly on a level with the bed of the sea.

This made it easy to reach up and draw oneself aboard; this both did.

The deck sloped at an uncomfortable angle and was intensely slippery.

But nevertheless they managed to make their way along it.

The search-light's rays reflected from overhead made something like a dim light.

But fortunately each wore upon his helmet a small electric lamp. These were of great value.

The deck of the sunken ship was of course swept clean by the action of the water.

Only a few rotting ropes and pulleys were clinging about the stumps of masts.

The binnacle still remained as did the capstan. But the wheel was gone.

Badly shattered in every part was the once stanch ship. Frank reckoned from appearances however, that she had not been many months in the water.

What of the fate of her crew?

Were they all drowned? Had any escaped? What was the tragic story of the sunken ship?

CHAPTER X.

THE OCTOPUS.

THIS the two explorers were going to make an effort to discover. The hatches had evidently been battened down, but when the vessel sank they had blown open again.

It was easy to find the companionway which led down into the cabin. The stairs were sound.

Down these the two divers now slowly climbed.

Their electric lamps illumined the cabin. It was a sad and harrowing scene which met their gaze.

It told the whole tragic story.

Upon a couch were the well preserved bodies of two females. They were clasped in each others' arms.

One was fair of face and young. The other was an older woman and probably her mother.

The doctor put his helmet close to Frank's and shouted:

"That is a sad sight. Probably the captain's wife and daughter."

"Very likely!" agreed Frank.

"They alone remained in the cabin when the boat went down?"

"Yes!"

"Probably the crew with their captain met death at their post like brave men, and were washed away by the sea."

This looked like a reasonable explanation, and for want of a better one it was accepted.

The two explorers passed through the cabin and its different compartments.

The vessel had been handsomely equipped and the water had not as yet destroyed all this.

But yet it could never be transported from the spot and must remain forever to decay and moulder.

Fishes had invaded the place and some few shell fish. These fled before the explorers.

The vessel had evidently been in the merchant trade between America and the South Pacific.

Her name was found upon a chart hanging on the cabin wall. It was the ship "Princess," Captain Andrew Hull of Portsmouth.

Frank made a mental note of this. They then passed into the forward cabin.

But the two women were the only members of the ship's company left aboard.

All the others were missing.

In the captain's cabin was a safe. The bolts had rusted and the door was easily wrenched open.

There were many papers in the safe, papers which might have been of value.

But they were so water soaked and decayed as to be useless now.

There was also several thousand dollars in gold and silver coins, a small bag of jewels and a few articles of vertu.

These were carefully picked up and placed in a bag. Then Frank placed his helmet to the doctor's and shouted:

"Let us return!"

"All right!" agreed the savant.

It seemed certainly as if nothing more was to be gained by remaining on board the ship.

So they retraced their steps to the companionway.

Frank had put a foot on the lower stair when he chanced to look up.

He instantly recoiled.

The sight which met his gaze was sufficiently thrilling to infuse the stoutest heart with terror.

The hatchway was completely filled with a hideous, spongy mass, and two enormous cat-like eyes glared down into the cabin.

A horrid beak-like mouth yawned in a hideous manner. It required but a glance for Frank to comprehend all.

The doctor was completely astounded, and managed to get word to Frank:

"What on earth is it?"

"Don't you see?" asked the young inventor in surprise.

"Some horrid sea monster!"

"An octopus!"

"Whew! He will be down here after us next."

"No, he cannot do that, for his body is too large to get through the hatch."

"Thank our stars for that."

"But it's just about as bad, for we are hemmed in."

This was a startling fact. The octopus held the deck of the ship and any attempt at exit from any of the cabins meant the dropping into his tentacles.

This would of course be a most horrible death, for the octopus is a veritable man eater.

This was indeed a predicament.

For a moment the situation looked dubious enough.

"On my word as a scholar," cried the doctor, "this is a bad scrape for us! What can we do, Frank?"

The young inventor was trying all the while to think of a plan.

Finally he drew his short handled ax from his belt, and advancing as near as he dared, made a blow at one of the cat eyes.

But he could not safely get near enough to make the blow effective.

Moreover, the octopus now thrust one long tentacle down into the cabin.

This kept Frank out of reach. There was no other available way at hand of attacking the monster.

The doctor leaned over and shouted:

"We are in a bad fix, Frank!"

"It looks like it."

"If it was on land now we could shoot that creature."

"It is impossible to attack it safely," said Frank.

Then an idea occurred to the young inventor. The cabin was provided with dead eye windows.

With a blow of his ax Frank smashed one of these. Then he tried to crawl through it.

Ordinarily he would have been able to do this, but with his helmet and generator it was impossible. He was obliged to abandon the attempt.

It would not work. There was one other way and this was to cut their way out through the planking.

This, however, was as yet sound and of toughest oak. The axes made slow work on it.

But the two captives kept at work until suddenly the doctor looking up, gave a start.

He dropped his ax and clutched Frank's arm; at the same time he pointed up to the hatchway.

The octopus was gone.

For a moment the two men looked at each other. What did it mean? Had the creature abandoned its attempt to secure them as prey? In that case it would be safe enough to make their exit by means of the hatchway. But yet there was a probable risk.

Frank looked at their work upon the tough oak timbers; but little progress had been made and their axes were growing dull.

He was not long in making up his mind.

"On my word," he cried; "we will risk it. Follow me, doctor."

The savant caught his gesture and was instantly by his shoulder; together they crept up the stairs.

They reached the level of the hatch and peered over it. The octopus was not in sight.

Frank did not hesitate.

He swung himself lightly upon deck and then started for the rail. The doctor followed him.

Just as they reached the rail, Frank saw a number of hideous writhing arms coming up over the other side of the ship.

The octopus was returning.

There was no time to lose.

As the octopus came upon that side of the ship, the divers slid over the other side.

Reaching the sands below they clutched the rail of the submarine boat. A moment later they were in the vestibule.

Frank shut the door and applied the force pump. In a few seconds the vestibule was empty.

The divers removed their suits quickly.

"By the soul of Aristotle!" gasped the doctor, "did we not outwit that chap in good shape?"

"We did that!" agreed Frank, "but if he had stayed by the hatch he would have bothered us much."

"I have no doubt of it."

It is needless to say that they were warmly welcomed by Barney and Pomp.

The two jokers had watched earnestly for them.

"Begorra, I knew Mither Frank wud come back if anybody cud!" cried Barney. "Shure, it's a charmed life his is!"

"Golly!" screamed Pomp, leaping up; "wha' am dat?"

All glanced through the observation window. It was easy enough to see what was meant.

There, pressed against the steel wire which protected the glass, was the hideous face of the octopus.

The monster's treacherous eyes seemed to be taking in every part of the cabin.

Its mighty tentacles were wound about the turret in a tremendous grip.

Barney fancied he could hear the steel crack.

"The monster is aboard of us!" cried the doctor. "Is there no way to settle his case, Frank?"

"Indeed there is," said the young inventor. "I'll fix him!"

He motioned for all to follow him into the pilot house. Then he produced the glass stools.

The rest was easy.

All stood upon these insulated stools while Frank connected the dynamos with the steel hull of the submarine boat.

Then a pressure upon a small button sent a tremendous current coursing through the hull. Of course the octopus felt it.

And so powerfull was it that the mighty monster, whose weight was tons, was hurled bodily from the deck.

It went writhing away and lay some yards distant upon the sands, motionless. The terrific shock had actually killed it.

"That cooked him!" cried the doctor, for once lapsing into slang, "he was not strong enough for that."

The octopus was disposed of. That danger was done away with, but a more momentous question now confronted the submarine travelers.

CHAPTER XI.

A REVULSION OF NATURE.

THE doctor was the first to broach this important question.

"How long are we to remain here, Frank?" he asked.

Frank replied gravely:

"Perhaps forever."

The savant was dumfounded.

"You don't mean it!" he exclaimed.

"I am in earnest."

"Is the boat as badly stuck as all that?"

"You may depend on it," replied Frank. "No action of the engines will draw her off."

"But—can she not be cut away?"

"Not easily. It would require an interminable amount of work. The wreck would have to be literally hewed to pieces."

"That is hard luck," affirmed the doctor; "is there no other way to get free?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"The use of dynamite."

The savant gave a violent start.

"Do you really mean that?" he asked. "Would it be safe?"

"Not altogether, yet it is feasible. In fact, it is the only logical and expeditious way of dislodging her."

"Shall you attempt it?"

Frank was silent a moment. Then he proceeded to don his diving suit again.

"Where are you going?"

"I am going out to take another look at her. Then I can answer your question explicitly."

The doctor bowed gravely.

"I wish you success!" he said.

And Frank proceeded to carry out his inspection. He went under the hull of the ship and carefully examined everything.

He was satisfied upon one point when he returned to the cabin. It was almost safe to try the dynamite.

"At least I shall risk it," he said, "it is our quickest way of getting free!"

Once more he ventured out into the sea and placed a good charge of the explosive in waterproof cases directly under the sunken wreck.

These were connected by wire with a battery.

Then he returned to the cabin.

It was a critical moment.

If they won, then their lives were safe to pursue the journey; if they lost, then their fate would be forever sealed to the world.

Frank made the electric connections and went forward into the pilot-house.

All were in readiness.

At exactly the right moment he pressed the electric button; the result was most terrific.

There was a muffled roar, a fearful shock and commotion. The Pearl rocked and swayed and strained as if coming to pieces.

The water seemed filled with flying debris, and it boiled and surged about the boat like a maelstrom.

"By Diogenes!" cried the doctor, in horror; "you have sealed our fate, Frank!"

"It was our only chance," said the young inventor, grimly.

But all was over in half a minute. The waters subsided and the submarine boat rocked and pitched a trifle which was evidence that she had broken away from her anchorage.

But just how badly she was damaged could not be seen just then. However, Frank went forward and examined the hull.

There was no leak.

To be sure there were a number of indentations in the metal, but these were not serious.

It was a successful exploit, and the submarine boat was extricated from her critical position.

The wreck had been literally shattered. She had broken in two and careened in opposite directions. But the party felt no further interest in her.

Their spirits rose.

"Now we are out of this scrape," declared Frank, "perhaps our luck will change."

"I hope so!" cried the doctor, "the problem now is how to get out of this mighty cavern!"

"You are right!" agreed Frank. "I believe it can be done."

"I am glad to hear you talk that way; it looks hopeful."

Barney now started the Pearl ahead.

As she progressed it became evident that they were coming into another underground sea.

All clung to the hope that eventually they would find an avenue of escape from the place.

But the days passed. Weeks came and went.

Every day brought some little incident of interest, but no material change in their position.

One day Frank said:

"To-morrow we shall have been six weeks in this deep sea cave. Unless we shall succeed in finding our way out soon I shall give up hope."

This was a good deal for Frank Reade, Jr., to say.

But he had been impelled to this by a number of dampening observations.

He had tried to keep the Pearl on a straight course, but was finally satisfied that after weeks of constant search they had only been sailing around within a limited area.

There had occurred nothing to warrant a belief that they would ever find a way out of the hopeless labyrinth.

This was discouraging enough, to be sure.

Barney, however, was extremely hopeful.

"On me worr'd as a gentleman," he declared, "there niver was a way av gittin' into a scrape but there was a way out av it. There's niver a door to go in but there's a door to go out. Shure we'll foind it yet."

Frank nor the doctor took no very hopeful view of the Celt's philosophy, but they did not say anything to discourage him.

But thrilling experiences were near at hand for the grand culmination of all.

This last day of the sixth week in the deep sea cave was a memorable one.

The Pearl had been groping blindly for many days in an apparently limitless sea.

The party had all grown weary of the situation.

A sort of grim despair had settled down upon them. All were thoroughly imbued with this.

The wheel was held most of the time by Barney. Upon this occasion the Celt had lashed it for a moment and turned to consult the key board.

The search-light made a pathway of light for many hundred yards ahead. By this the coast seemed clear.

But Barney's vision had not been keen enough to note one startling fact.

In the very path of the boat lay a wicked coral reef; it was almost invisible except to the sharpest kind of a scrutiny.

Barney turned just in time to see it, but too late to avert a catastrophe.

He jammed the helm hard aport, but too late. There was a terrific shock, a grinding crash, and the boat stood still.

Every one on board was thrown violently down by the shock; Barney gave a wail of despair and horror.

The next moment Frank came rushing wildly into the pilot-house.

"Mercy on us, Barney!" he cried. "What has happened?"

"Och, murtha, sor, an' it's me own sthupid carelessness! Shure an' it's aground we are, sor!"

"Aground!"

Frank's face cleared, for he believed that if the boat was merely aground, it would be an easy enough matter to raise her by means of the tank.

He at once turned the lever. The air rushed into the tank, the boat strained and groaned but did not rise.

The truth was apparent.

She had wedged herself immovably in the coral reef. The situation was truly a serious one.

Barney continually lamented his carelessness, until Frank tired of it and cried:

"For mercy's sake, shut up! It is a poor plan to cry over spilt milk. Let us find a way out of the scrape!"

This brought the Celt to his senses, and he at once went to work to help repair the damage done by his carelessness.

Frank could not judge from the cabin just what the position of the boat on the reef was. So he decided to put on his diving-suit and go out and see.

He was about to do this when an incident occurred to prevent. There was a sudden shock, a dull rumble and the boat began to pitch violently.

"An earthquake!" cried the doctor.

Indeed this seemed true.

From the windows of the pilot house the voyagers beheld a momentary fearful spectacle.

They plainly saw a large fissure open up in the sandy bottom of the deep sea cave. The waters began to boil and then—all was darkness.

What happened in the next few moments none ever knew. It was a jumbled mass of incidents.

The earthquake shock broke the electric connections and the boat was instantly in darkness.

It seemed as if giant hands had picked it up bodily and were hurling it through space.

What was to be the result?

Was it to be dashed to pieces? Were they being hurled to an awful death?

In any event, the voyagers were utterly powerless.

They certainly could do nothing to prevent the catastrophe. They were in the hands of fate. Only God's mercy could save them.

Realizing this, they clung to the nearest stationary object. Thus they awaited they knew not what.

On and on the submarine boat was whirled.

Luckily it was that she was a staunch boat. Fortunate indeed that her ribs and plates of steel were of the toughest and best.

Else she would have been dashed to pieces and the lives of her passengers destroyed.

How long the Pearl was in the grip of the submarine disturbance the voyagers never knew, but they felt the boat suddenly on a firm keel, and light broke in upon them.

The doctor and Frank were the first to recover.

They stared about them in utter amazement.

The submarine boat was speeding along over the surface of a blue sea.

What was more, the light which permeated the entire cabin was the light of day.

CHAPTER XII.

OUT OF THE CAVE—THE END.

For the first time in many weeks the light of day dazzled the eyes of the voyagers.

The boat was also on the surface of a sea. This could be easily explained.

Frank had emptied the reservoir in attempting to raise her from the reef. It had remained empty.

But this sudden evolution from stygian gloom of the deep sea cave to daylight was inexplicable.

That they were not out of the cave was apparent, for its rocky roof could be seen far above.

The doctor and Frank went to the observation window and looked out.

Then they silently stared at each other. Finally the doctor said:

"What the deuce happened to us, Frank? Where are we?"

"That is a puzzler," replied the young inventor, "the last I remember of was the deep sea convulsion or earthquake!"

"Just so! We were hurled I don't know how far by it."

"Of course it explains our being here. But, where are we?"

"That is a mystery!"

"It looks to me as if we were on the level of the ocean again and in some part of the cavern which is above it."

"There is no doubt of that."

"Then!" cried Frank, joyfully, "we are saved, and will live to return to our friends! Indeed we have been rescued from that deep sea tomb by a revulsion of Nature's forces, a sort of miracle."

There was no doubt of this. The voyagers were united in this opinion. Barney and Pomp now put in an appearance.

Their surprise was scarcely less than that of Frank and the doctor.

"But, begorra, can yez see phwere the daylight cums from?" asked Barney, in wonderment.

"Golly! I can do dat!" declared Pomp.

"Yez can?"

"Yas, sahl!"

"Well, phwere does it cum from?"

The darky pointed to the roof of the cavern.

It was seen that daylight was admitted by means of mighty crevices.

This was evidence that an island or large body of land was above them, and that this was no longer part of the deep sea cave.

The Pearl had been flying at full speed over the waters of the cavern sea.

Frank now checked her speed.

After much discussion, the only hypothesis of the affair which could be reached was that the earthquake had burst the roof of the deep sea cavern and hurled the boat through and into this upper sea.

However, this matter was one which they saw no hope of ever solving. So it was allowed to drop.

The one question now before them was as to how they were to find their way out of this cavern and to the open world once more.

It seemed to them as if they would never again venture deep sea exploration if they could only gain this end.

Even the doctor had had enough. He even said:

"If I can only get back to America safely I think I will stay there. I believe I shall find a large enough field there."

"Be jabers, Readestown is good enough for me," averred Barney.

"Suah, dar's no place like home," put in Pomp.

But Frank laughed.

"After a month at home," he said, "you will be just as anxious to start out upon another expedition."

"I suppose so," laughed the doctor, "but this is our present mood you know, Frank."

"Yes," agreed the young inventor; "I almost feel that way myself. But is there no outlet to this infernal place?"

"It don't look like it, unless it be through those crevices overhead."

This now became the main object. All had tired of submarine cruising.

Six weeks in a deep sea cave had given them a genteel sufficiency.

The boat sailed on at a rapid rate and a good lookout was kept for an opening. But after some hours of sailing the rock wall of the roof began to hang lower.

"We are getting to the limit of the cave I believe," cried Frank.

"Now, if ever, we ought to find a way out of this place!"

"And if we do not—" began the doctor.

"We will!" said Frank, resolutely.

Rapidly the roof lowered itself now until the turrets nearly scraped against the rocky surface. Then Frank filled the tank and let the boat sink for some distance.

The search-light showed a passage dead ahead. Into this the boat sailed.

Wider grew the passage as they sailed on.

Finally all vestige of the rock walls disappeared. After sailing on in this fashion for some ways, Frank sent the search-light's rays upwards.

They were not refracted; it was evident that they struck the roof of no cavern.

The young inventor was thrilled.

"On my word!" he muttered. "Can it be possible that we are in the open sea?"

The doctor heard him.

He gave a quick cry.

"Thank God, if we are!" he cried. "Why not know the truth, Frank?"

"I will!"

Frank pressed the tank valve. Instantly the boat began to rise. Up she went rapidly.

Up and up.

Suddenly she burst through the surface, and for a moment the hearts of all stood still.

The blue bounding sea was about them, the blue sky overhead.

They were released from the depths, once more restored to the beautiful upper world which they now knew how to appreciate.

Instinctively a wild cheer burst from their lips.

"Hurrah!"

Then to the east they saw a long line of coast. It was broken with little bays and indentations between high cliffs.

While waving palms and tropical verdure told them that they were yet upon the line of the equator.

"What land is that?" asked the doctor.

"On my word I do not know!" replied Frank, "it is my opinion, however, that we have been under that coast for the past few hours."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, do you see that distant long ridge rising over the cliffs? I believe that is the dome of the cavern which we just left."

"Then we have been under land part of the way?"

"So I believe!"

"But—surely we must have traveled a long ways under the sea to reach land. What coast can it be?"

"We will try and find out. Hello! What is that yonder? It looks like a small seaport."

Frank brought his glass to bear upon a little harbor just within the cliff. As a result he cried:

"Yes, it is a seaport. Now to find out where we are!"

The submarine boat was headed for the distant town. As they neared the harbor numbers of small sailing craft were seen.

One of these was hailed, and stood over near the Pearl. Frank went on the forward deck.

"Ahoy!" he shouted.

The answer came back in an unintelligible tongue. The doctor, who was a linguist, was called.

"What do they say?" asked Frank.

The hail was repeated.

"Well, I hardly know," replied the savant. "I should say, however, it is some outlandish dialect they use. They look like Portuguese. Let us see if they understand Spanish."

Accordingly the doctor hailed them in Spanish. To his delight the reply came back:

"We are Portuguese. What are you?"

"We are Americans."

"What do you in these waters with your war-ship?"

"This is not a war-ship," replied the doctor. "It is the submarine boat Pearl."

An incredulous reply came back.

Then the savant asked:

"What coast is that yonder?"

"Africa," was the reply.

Astounded, the voyagers looked at each other.

"Africa!" gasped Frank. "Why, that cannot be! We have then come a good ways under sea!"

"Full fifteen hundred miles," declared the doctor.

Then he hailed the fisherman again:

"How far are we from the Equator?"

Evidently surprised at the question, the Portuguese answered:

"What is wrong with your reckoning? You are right on the Equator. Yonder coast is South Guinea, and that cape over there is Lopez!"

"Enough!" exclaimed Frank, closing his glass. "It is hard to realize that we have traveled such a distance in the last six weeks."

"Yet you must remember that we were continually on the move, and that we sailed rapidly."

"I bear that in mind," said Frank, "but fifteen hundred miles in a deep sea cave! That seems incredible!"

Yet it was true.

From the point where the cavern was entered to this—Cape Lopez on the coast of Africa—was fully fifteen hundred miles.

It was a marvelous thing to reflect upon, that the party had traveled so far in such a manner, beneath the bed of the sea, and

had only by a miraculous chance seen the surface and the light of day again.

As all this came full force to Frank, he shivered:

"Ugh!" he declared. "I have had enough. Let us go home."

"Amen!" said the doctor.

"Home, sweet home, dere am no place loike home!" sang Pomp, throwing a flip flap.

By accident of course, he landed on Barney's corns. The Celt gave a hyena like howl.

"Howly murder! do yez mane to kill me!" he shrieked. "Shure, yez blunderin' fool yez."

"Huh! reckon it didn' kill yo'! sniffed Pomp.

"Begorra I'll show yez!" roared the Celt, making a dive for his tormentor.

But Pomp ducked his head.

"Look out dar, chile!" he shouted, "I'se a drefful ole batterin' ram, I is. Look out, chile!"

But Barney was out for blood, and was not to be checked. He struck the Ethiopian full force.

Or rather Pomp struck him. It required no magnifying glass to see which had the best of it.

Pomp's hard skull caught the Celt under the very last rib. It squeezed his wind, you may be sure."

For a moment he rolled upon the deck gasping and panting. In his exuberance, however, Pomp made a mistake.

He paused to indulge in a boisterous laugh. With his head thrown back he was doing the act to perfection when Barney recovered.

Suddenly the Celt picked up a slab of wood and struck the darky full across the shins.

Great Scott!

What a changing about, what a turning of tables there was. The darky could have stood the blow on his head well enough.

But the shin is the negro's vulnerable point as all boys know. It is hardly necessary to say that Pomp's laugh became a crescendo of wails.

"Ow, yo' no count I'ishman," he roared, "yo' done killed dis chile. Fo' de good Lor, I hab yo' haht fo' dat!"

"Turn about is fair play, begorra!" roared Barney; "the O'Sheas wuz niver whipped yet!"

And the Celt followed up his advantage by grappling with his adversary. How the affair would have terminated but for an interruption it is not easy to say.

The interruption was Frank Reade, Jr.'s voice calling from the pilot house:

"Barney, you rascal, come here!"

Instantly the two jokers broke away. Barney sped to the pilot house while Pomp went below to get some liniment for his afflicted shins.

Ten minutes later the submarine boat was homeward bound.

And now dear reader we must bring you gently to the end of our tale of deep sea adventure.

Suffice it to say that the submarine boat reached America in safety. She made her way up the river to Readestown.

The voyagers were received by a great throng of friends. All were glad to see them home again.

Dr. Calliope went back to his scientific studies with new vim and much valuable data. He became the most envied man in the profession.

The Pearl was laid by for repairs, but Frank said:

"She will never be able to go so long a voyage again. However, before we attempt another sea trip, I have another project to carry out."

And to this the young inventor applied himself. What it was we may be able to inform the reader at some future time. Until then let us say adieu.

[THE END.]

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